

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
COMMITTEE:	COUNTY COUNCIL
DATE:	5 MARCH 2013
TITLE OF REPORT:	A PRISON IN NORTH WALES
REPORT BY:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON BEHALF OF THE NORTH WALES REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To present information to Council regarding discussions at the Regional Board on the case for locating the proposed new prison in North Wales.
ACTION:	Members of the Council are requested to consider their support for the Board's effects to have the prison located in North Wales.

A PRISON IN NORTH WALES

Purpose of the Report

The report aims to:

- Summarise the recent announcement of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) with regard to prison policy,
- Invite the board to re-affirm its commitment to seek a prison in North Wales on the terms announced by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ),
- Inform the North Wales Councils of the actions agreed by the North Wales Regional Leadership Board to enable North Wales to compete vigorously to secure the location of a prison in North Wales.

Introduction

The Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling, made a ministerial statement on 10th January 2013 regarding the Management of Prison Management (Attached).

The Minister stated that modern prisons could deliver better custody and rehabilitation services more efficiently than older prison accommodation, citing savings from HMP Oakwood, a new prison that provides places and better services at less than half average cost of existing prison places.

The Minister therefore announced plans to close 6 prisons, including Shrewsbury and the partial closure of a further 3 prisons.

This capacity reduction of 2,600 is equivalent to the capacity of HMP Oakwood and four new house-block developments, akin to mini-prisons built within the existing estate, including a development at HMP Parc near Bridgend.

The significant reduction in costs that the new developments have, and will produce in comparison to older parts of the prison estate, has led to the Minister making a commitment to examine the feasibility of building a new prison with a capacity of 2000 places or more in the North West, London or North Wales.

The Opportunity

- The Board has lobbied for a prison in North Wales since 2007, nearly securing a prison development near Caernarfon prior to the 2010 election.
- The Board seeks a prison in North Wales on the grounds:
- Of economic benefits, which are substantial in terms of stable employment and a supply chain covering a range of services from education, health, catering and building maintenance.
- That North Wales is the only area in the UK not to have a prison in the region.
- Of culture, to secure a prison subject to the provision of the Welsh Language Act, where prisoners from North Wales are held in facilities where they can use their first language with the benefit of reducing re-offending.
- Of efficiency for the public services (prisoner transport and transport costs and travelling time to court/prison for legal/offender management services)
- Of improving rehabilitation and reduction of re-offending rates through enabling closer contact between families and support professions by improving access to the prison. Keeping families together also avoids cost to public services and is correlated with prisons that are accessible to families.

A prison in the region will boost the Criminal Justice system in the area (probation, courts etc.) creating jobs in the legal and court system.

The economic benefits are considerable. In work to assess the impact of a 1500 bed prison it was estimated that 1,165 jobs could be created through direct employment in the prison and indirectly through the supply chain. The expenditure going through a 1,500 bed prison into the wider community would be in the region of £47m. Over half of new jobs would be in the immediate area of location.

Prison employment is underpinned by training and qualifications The NVQ and evidenced qualification base of the workforce would be improved by a prison with the additional benefit of improving the attractiveness of the local employment market to other employers.

The exercise to select a site for a 1,500 bed prison was halted in 2010 after the general election and the public expenditure reductions announced shortly thereafter.

The site criteria for the newly announced phase of feasibility consideration will be similar to the exercise started in 2009/10 following the cancellation of the Caernarfon project. This included journey times for prisoners and families.

This experience gained in 2009/2010 and the approaches considered can built on for the new process.

Securing a prison is a competitive process where both politics and a strong business case judged by the MoJ's site criteria play a part in the decision. The success of the region will depend on securing strong political support from across the region and making an attractive "business proposition" that meets the economic and policy goals of the MoJ. There will need to be a willingness to work constructively with the department to meet the needs of offenders from North Wales in a larger institution.

The economic benefits of a prison can be obtained by enabling the MoJ to develop a prison which will: -

- Radically reduce costs compared to the current estate. Land values and the quality and competitiveness of the local workforce will play a part in this
- Modernise internal services to reduce re-offending
- Have excellent links to the transport system of the NW and West Midlands
- Have excellent links to the criminal justice system in the NW and West Midlands
- Take capacity from Shrewsbury which includes Welsh prisoners from Mid Wales and enables the release of capacity from other prisons like Altcourse

Next Steps

The North Wales Regional Leadership the Board identified the following priorities: -

- Demonstrate political commitment to pursue a prison for North Wales
- Reporting the opportunity for a prison in North Wales to each local authority
- Demonstrate sensitivity to meeting the policy objectives of the MoJ (largely cost reduction and modernisation of facilities which enable better services to reduce re-offending)
- Secure details of the information required by the MoJ to conduct a feasibility study and assess potential sites including timelines.

In North Wales there is a heavy reliance on manufacturing employment, particularly in NE Wales. A prison in North Wales would diversify the balance of the economy towards more service employment.

The Secretary of State for the Wales Office has advertised the opportunity to all the Local Authorities in the region and has offered to help Councils in North Wales work with the Ministry of Justice. Decisions on the location of prisons are non-devolved.

The Welsh Government has also expressed an interest in supporting North Wales' councils to seek a prison in North Wales.

Learning

The recent announcement triggers the third phase of activity to secure a prison in North Wales.

The inclusion of North Wales in the shortlisted regions for consideration for a new prison cannot be divorced from the recent delegation to meet the Prisons Minister, Jeremy Wright MP facilitated by the Wales Office.

The key features of the offer from the North Wales delegation were:

- Suitable sites for a 1500 bed prison with good communications to the criminal justice system in the North West of England
- Local Authorities willing to work positively with the Ministry of Justice with regard to identifying sites suitable for a prison
- A willingness to meet the criteria set by the ministry of justice.
- A willingness to share a prison with the North West and/or the West Midlands

As can be seen by the Minister's announcement and the advice of the Prisons Minister to the North Wales delegation, the primary objective of the MoJ is to reduce the cost of the prison estate. Scale plays a part in the reduction of costs.

The lesson from the Caernarfon experience is that a case for a prison framed in terms of the needs of North Wales alone lacks the numbers to meet the normal criteria of the Ministry of Justice and will not have the scale to reduce costs to the level required by the MoJ (i.e. 50% plus).

The political commitment of the then prisons minister, David Hanson MP working with the Welsh Government took the Caernarfon project near to commencement but when he was moved on the department (MoJ) cancelled the contract.

North Wales then joined an exercise to consider the feasibility of a 1500 bed prison based on meeting need from North Wales and the North West of England. The Board committed to sharing a prison with neighbouring English regions meet the capacity criteria of 1500 beds set by the MoJ. In doing so the Board's officers considered whether local needs could be accommodated within a specific block in the larger prison. There was also a process of considering how to maximise the spread of benefits across the region.

- Secure information from the MoJ on prison populations and the categories that they are planning to accommodate in a potential N Wales site.
- Authorise officers to identify potential sites based on the criteria provided by MoJ officials

Recommendations

The Council is asked to endorse the proposals of the NWRLB and support the Board by:

- Issuing a press release welcoming the opportunity to compete for a prison to be located in North Wales
- Corresponding with the Wales Office, The Prisons Minister and the Welsh Government to welcome the announcement and offer support for a prison to be located in North Wales.

The Council to note that:

- Officers from each Council will meet MoJ officials to identify site criteria and seek offender information (categories to be accommodated, prisoner and remand volumes including sentences under 12 months etc.)
- Officers from each council will meet together to identify potential sites and discuss the political will to promote sites and enabling the region to offer the MoJ a shortlist of sites that meet their criteria
- Planning is a separate process from site identification and will be clarified with the Ministry of Justice
- The North Wales Police will construct a business case that identifies the benefits to the communities of North Wales of being able to accommodate offenders from North Wales in a prison located in North Wales. This will require liaison with the MoJ to be facilitated by Council Officers.
- The NWRLB will regularly review progress at each NWRLB meeting

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North Wales' Public Service Leaders Welcome Opportunity to Bid for a Prison "in North Wales"

The North Wales Regional Leadership Board, representing Leaders from the six North Wales Councils, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the North Wales Police, The North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board welcomed the announcement of Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling to consider building a prison in North Wales.

Councillor Hugh Evans, Leader of Denbighshire County Council said,

"The Board has been lobbying for a prison in North Wales for over 5 years. It is great news that we are on the shortlist of regions to be considered for a new prison.

Representatives of the Board met the Prisons Minister with the Wales Office in October last year and presented a case for locating a prison in North Wales. I believe our efforts have put us in contention for a substantial investment in our region that could create over a thousand jobs and provide a major £50m per annum boost to the whole economy of North Wales."

Councillor Dyfed Edwards, Leader of Gwynedd Council said,

"I am excited by the prospect of securing a prison in North Wales. We need the investment and the jobs but we also need to have a prison where the Welsh Language Act applies so that Welsh culture can be recognised in the prison system. A prison in North Wales will be closer to home. Better access for family and professional support workers to prisoners from North Wales will result in reduced re-offending and safer communities on offender release. There is a strong public service efficiency argument for a prison in North Wales."

Aelodau o Fwrdd Arweinyddiaeth Rhanbarthol Gogledd Cymru • Members of the North Wales Regional Leadership Board



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COUNTY COUNCIL



CYNGOR
Sir Ddinbych
Denbighshire
COUNTY COUNCIL



CYNGOR
Sir y Fflint
Flintshire
COUNTY COUNCIL



HEDDLU GOGLEDD CYMRU
Gogledd Cymru diogelach
NORTH WALES POLICE
A safer North Wales



Awtordod Tân ac Acheb
Gogledd Cymru
North Wales Fire and
Rescue Authority



GIG
NHS

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

Bwrdd Arweinyddiaeth Rhanbarthol Gogledd Cymru

Arwain Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus

North Wales Regional Leadership Board

Leading Public Services



Councillor Neil Rogers, Leader of Wrexham Borough Council said,

“The Justice Secretary’s announcement is a big opportunity for North Wales. However, there will be competition for the location of a prison from other regions. It is essential that we have no pre-conceptions about a site and work closely with the Ministry of Justice to understand their needs. It is early days and the public must understand that it is far too early to speculate about specific sites as we have yet to discuss the requirements of the Ministry of Justice which will drive site criteria.”

The Board agreed that: -

- The size of the prison proposed by the Ministry of Justice means that it must serve both North Wales and parts of England (the North West, West Midlands)
- The North Wales Police will produce a business case quantifying the potential benefits to community safety from reduced re-offending in North Wales should a prison be located in North Wales.
- Representatives of the Board will meet with Ministry of Justice officials to establish their thinking with regard to the timescale and the specification for building the new prison. The requirements of the Ministry of Justice will drive the location and specific site criteria.
- Each local authority in North Wales will be asked to welcome the announcement of the Ministry of Justice and receive a report of the actions being taken by the North Wales Regional Leadership Board.

ENDS

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GIG
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WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Thursday 10 January 2013

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Prison Capacity Management

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Chris Grayling):

Our strategy for the custodial estate is to ensure that we have sufficient places to meet the demand of the courts whilst securing best value for money for the taxpayer.

My intention is to have more adult male prison capacity available than we had in 2010 but at a much lower unit and overall cost. Our strategy for achieving this is to replace accommodation which is old, inefficient or has limited long-term strategic value with cheaper modern capacity which is designed to better meet the demand for prison places and supports our aim to drive down stubbornly high reoffending rates. I am also announcing today that the Government is to start feasibility work on a new prison that could hold more than 2,000 prisoners – around a quarter more than the largest current facility.

At present, we have buildings within the prison estate which date back to the 18th Century. Prisons are not all located where we would want them to be to best meet the needs of the courts or support resettlement and there is an annual maintenance cost of approximately £184m. There is clear evidence that by replacing old uneconomic places with modern prison capacity we can drive substantial savings for the taxpayer and I am determined to do just that.

Last year we opened a significant amount of new accommodation including 1,600 places at HMP Oakwood in the West Midlands. The average cost at Oakwood is £13,200 per place. This is less than half the average cost of existing prison places, and sets the benchmark for future costs. In order to further drive down unit costs in prisons, I can today announce that we plan to significantly increase capacity at four existing prisons by building additional houseblocks to provide up to 1,260 new modern and cost effective places. Our current intention is that new accommodation will be built at HMP Parc in Bridgend, HMP Peterborough in Cambridgeshire, HMP The Mount in Hertfordshire and HMP Thameside in London.

These houseblocks, along with Oakwood, which is now reaching capacity, represent over 2,800 new places. This provides the opportunity to close excess capacity elsewhere in the estate.

I am therefore announcing that we will close around 2,600 old and uneconomic places through the closure of six prisons and the partial closure of accommodation in three other sites. The affected establishments are:

	Closures	Partial Closures
Bullwood Hall	Kingston	Chelmsford
Canterbury	Shepton Mallet	Hull
Gloucester	Shrewsbury	Isle of Wight

The decision to close, or partially close places in these establishments is based on the suitability, sustainability and the cost of this accommodation.

Closures form just one part of our strategy to improve the operation of our prison estate and drive down the costs to the public. We will also decommission 200 contractually crowded places at private prisons, which are not currently needed.

We will continue to ensure that our estate reflects prison population demands, and in line with the falling population in the youth estate, I can also announce that we intend to negotiate a change to the function of HMYOI Ashfield and re-role it to a prison to hold adult male prisoners. I intend to work with the Youth Justice Board to review the operation of the youth estate to ensure that it provides effective education and training for young people whilst delivering value for money to the taxpayer.

Furthermore, I am conscious that women offenders have particular needs and that the custodial female estate should be organised as effectively as possible to meet gender specific requirements whilst also delivering best value for the public. I have therefore asked officials to undertake a review of custodial arrangements for women. I expect this review to be completed by the summer.

As part of our strategy to modernise the estate and significantly reduce unit and overall costs, I have asked officials to explore options for building a new prison to enable us to accelerate the closure of uneconomic capacity across the rest of the estate. We will consider the feasibility of sites in the North West, North Wales and in London in line with demand for places in these regions and I will provide further details to the House as this work progresses.

Overall, this capacity reduction will save £63 million per year from the cost of running our prisons. These savings are in addition to the plans we have already set out to the House for how we propose to make significant cost reductions over the next few years through the application of an efficient benchmark for all public sector prisons, and through further competition of services.

This Government is determined to ensure that we have a resilient custodial estate with sufficient capacity available to meet the demands to imprison those committed by the courts. We also intend to ensure that the cost of a prison place is dramatically reduced. The strategy I am outlining today will help achieve both these aims.

